PASSAGE THREE (Questions 14–21)

The American flag is the end product of a long evolution. Each of its component parts has its own history.

The very first American flag was hoisted in the skies over Boston on January 1, 1776, by the American forces there. This first flag consisted of thirteen red and white stripes representing the number of American colonies. It also included the British Cross of St. George and Cross of St. Andrew. It could be considered rather ironic that these symbols of British rule were included on the American flag in that the American colonists were fighting for independence from the British.

The origin of the stars on the current flag is obscure; that is, the stars could possibly have been taken from the flag of Rhode Island, or they could have been taken from the coat of arms of the Washington family. According to legend, this first flag with stars was sewn by Betsy Ross, a Philadelphia seamstress who was famous for her clever needlework. This version of the flag contained thirteen stars and thirteen stripes, one for each of the thirteen colonies battling for independence.

The original idea was to add one star and one stripe for each state that joined the new, young country. However, by 1818, the number of states had grown to twenty, and it did not work well to keep adding stripes to the flag. As a result, Congress made the decision to revert to the original thirteen stripes representing the thirteen original colonies and adding a star each time a new state was admitted. This has been the policy ever since.

14. The word "product" in line 1 is closest in meaning to
    (A) goods
    (B) merchandise
    (C) banner
    (D) result

15. Something that is "hoisted" (line 3) is
    (A) created
    (B) found
    (C) raised
    (D) made

16. The word "ironic" in line 6 could most easily be replaced by
    (A) steel-like
    (B) normal
    (C) unexpected
    (D) nationalistic

17. Which of the following is closest in meaning to "obscure" in line 8?
    (A) Unclear
    (B) Original
    (C) Modern
    (D) Known

18. In line 11, the word "seamstress" is used to describe someone who
    (A) works at home
    (B) sews
    (C) is a part of high society
    (D) practices medicine

19. The word "work" in line 14 could best be replaced by
    (A) get a job
    (B) function
    (C) accomplish
    (D) make an effort

20. The word "keep" in line 14 could best be replaced by
    (A) continue
    (B) maintain
    (C) hold
    (D) guard

21. The expression "revert to" in line 15 means
    (A) return to
    (B) add to
    (C) rejoice over
    (D) forget about

Phillips, D. (2003). Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL Test : The Paper Test. New York: Longman.